



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 26, 2013

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## **Supervisors Call For Detailed Budget Breakdown Of Sheriff's Medical Services To Inmates**

With the goal of increasing accountability from the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Medical Services Bureau, the Board of Supervisors Tuesday took the unprecedented step of requiring a detailed breakdown of the bureau's budget and detailed enumeration of services it delivers to inmates.

Acting on a motion by Board of Supervisors Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas, the board ordered the creation of a separate budget unit for the bureau in next year's annual budget, insisting that its current method of accounting is insufficient.

"We need to know – taxpayers need to know — exactly what services are being provided by the Sheriff's medical bureau; how the bureau is staffed with doctors and nurses relative to the number of patients treated and what services are being delivered at precisely what cost," said Ridley-Thomas. "This is a question of both patient care and economic efficiency."

The Sheriff's medical services bureau screens approximately 144,000 inmates each year, and the Sheriff's Department estimates that 60 percent of all inmates who enter the jails receive some medical services. Treatments include: primary care, general obstetrics, gynecology, specialty care, ophthalmology and dentistry. In addition to services provided by the Sheriff's department, the departments of Health Services and Mental Health also treat inmates, with the cost for medical care totaling about \$241 million annually, according to a review of the bureau by the Auditor-Controller.

This significant investment of taxpayer funds, however, is not carefully tracked. The Sheriff's Department, could not provide the Auditor-Controller with detailed information about physician and nurse contacts with inmates or a detailed workload.

Serious lapses by the department in medical attention to inmates have resulted in millions of dollars of payouts from the county to inmates who received either poor treatment or none for serious conditions, incidents that, along with the Auditor-Controller's report, have catalyzed the board to more rigorously scrutinize the bureau.

"The lack of workload data prevents the county from assessing the efficacy of the services being delivered to inmates and the appropriateness of the cost for these services—and that's no way to run a department," the Supervisor said.

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